

Warning echo from Wycombe

Wycombe Wanderers 4, Hitchin Town 1

INJURY PROBLEMS OR NOT, Wycombe Wanderers powered their way to a League "double"—this time blasting Hitchin in a result which echoed loudly from Loakes Park to the Meadow, where Isthmian pacesetters Sutton took Saturday off for a goalless friendly with Chesham.

But there's no time to relax in Brian Lee's squad with so much going for them right now.

Every match is of paramount importance. And that's how the Blues are treating the situation, systematically dispatching each opposition as they appear.

On Saturday, it was Hitchin's turn to withstand Wycombe's oh-so-busy forwards. Despite game efforts, they fared no better than others before them.

As many as eight men at a time fell back in support of Town's 'keeper, Moore. Only four minutes had ticked by when Robinson booted the ball to the safety of a corner with Keith Searle menacing.

The Hitchin number three was soon to meet with misfortune however, being stretchered off with a severe leg injury midway through the first half—a setback the visitors could ill afford under any circumstances.

From the casualty queue built up in recent weeks, Wycombe drew both Ted Powell and John Delaney.

But injuries to Fuschillo and Blunt, led the way for the re-teaming of a familiar duo—Ian Rundle and Charlie Gale, last season's first choice full backs.

The Wanderers front line

By

Mike Whitesman

included two walking wounded; Tony Horseman again played with a tightly bandaged fractured rib, while Larry Pritchard nursed his damaged hand.

When Wycombe momentarily relaxed their siege, Hitchin were quick to break out, threatening via the long-legged Harley and the terrier-like Griggle.

Hitchin's defence managed to foil what had obviously been a much practised move by the Wanderers when Pritchard sprinted across field to meet John Delaney's 19th-minute free kick.

Wanderers' pressure deserved a goal, however, and the 22nd minute saw just that as Hutchinson followed through to ram his drive waist high past Moore.

Unselfish teamwork made Wycombe as difficult to contain as ever, with touches of desperation creeping into Town's defence.

Hutchinson, seeking to repeat his earlier success, raced goalwards again five minutes later, only to be stopped by Robinson.

Both men were hurt in the incident — "Hutch" receiving some of trainer Jock Shepherd's "special" treatment on his right leg, but Robinson suffering worse.

A key man until then in the visitors' back division, he was carried off and rushed to Wycombe General Hospital with suspected badly torn ligaments in his right knee.

Hitchin reshuffled their line-up to incorporate substitute Cruickshank, but, after a six-minute stoppage, they went 2-0 down within seconds of the restart.

Again Wanderers prospered by their ability to spot the half-chance. Keith Searle converged on the ball with Hawkins and Moore, but won the chase by a split second and drove his shot into the back netting.

Hutchinson's luck hardly ran parallel to his industry. Given his fair share he might have compiled a hat-trick by the interval.

Instead, as play neared first half injury time, Wycombe's rearguard suddenly found themselves involved. Giggle, who had earlier all but earned his marching orders from referee Salmon after a show of temperament, sent in a great shot which pounded a post while John Maskell dived at full stretch.

Three minutes later—by now eight minutes over time—Hitchin briefly restored their hopes of pulling back a point when Brookes drove the ball forward and Bernie Gogan managed to get a slight touch in back-heading it past the unsighted Maskell.

The injury-prone Gogan had broken his nose in the first meeting with Wanderers at Top Field, when Town kept a tighter watch on their opponents, losing narrowly 2-1.

Saturday's two-goal margin was restored in the 55th minute. Searle again added the finishing touch to a move engineered brilliantly by the persistent Horseman. "Bodger" worked possession across Hitchin's area to set his colleague up for an angled shot near the line.

Pratt made a timely intervention as Searle steadied himself to attempt another shot in mid-period, but Wycombe scored number four six minutes from time through Pritchard.

Stationed handily in front of the net, he transferred Ted Powell's centre with an accurate header, the flight of which had Moore beaten completely.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell; I. Rundle, C. Gale, E. Powell, J. Delaney, B. Baker, B. Bremer, J. Hutchinson, K. Searle, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman. (Sub. G. Anthony (not used).

HITCHIN TOWN: T. Moore; H. Pratt, P. Robinson (Sub. R. Cruickshank, 32 mins.), M. Howkins, N. Church, T. Brothers, B. Mapp, J. Brooks, B. Gogan, J. Harley, P. Giggle.

Referee: Mr. K. G. Salmon (Barnet).

Official attendance: 2,628.

Half-time: 2-1. Goalscorers: Wycombe—Hutchinson (22), Searle 2 (33, 55), Pritchard (84). Hitchin—Gogan (1st half injury time).